

OZARK CONNECTION

Update On Forest Plan Revision

ISSUE 5


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Plan Revision Moves Forward


Since publishing the last issue of the **OZARK CONNECTION** (January 2003), the Planning Team has been involved in compiling data and information that will be used to formulate the proposed alternatives that will serve as the driving force of the plan revision.

The Ozark-St. Francis, Ouachita, and Mark Twain National Forests have been working on a similar time line. By doing so, they are able to collaborate when possible and share common expertise. Although each is a separate forest with individual needs, the ultimate goals are quite similar.


Following are brief descriptions of activities related to each resource area:

 **Recreation/Social/Economic:** Recreation is completing the SMS (Scenery Management System) inventory. This is a new inventory of scenic resources. The Ozark-St. Francis National Forests have many beautiful scenic areas. This inventory will enable us to create alternatives to manage these scenic resources for the future. Final information for "special areas" is also being gathered. These areas include wild and scenic rivers, special interest areas, scenic byways, wilderness areas and experimental forests.


From the socio-economics side, planners are reviewing recreation, timber, and other areas to gain data which will substantiate alternatives that will meet future social/economic needs.

 **Vegetation Management:** Personnel involved in the vegetation aspect of the Plan have been concentrating on updating the Forest CISC (Continuous Inventory Stand Conditions) program to reflect recent changes caused by the Red Oak Borer epidemic. These results are being downloaded into a forest-wide

database which will be able to predict future development of vegetative ecosystems based on various situations. Vegetation Management is also analyzing land suitability to determine which Forest areas are best suited for timber production.

 **Wildlife/Fisheries/Aquatics:** A team of wildlife biologists are finalizing a species viability assessment. This assessment is an evaluation of the plants, mammals, and birds native to the Forest to ensure that all species have enough habitat to continue to thrive. Key habitats and special needs of "at risk" species have been identified and will be evaluated under current plan direction and under alternatives considered in plan revision.

Forest Service and Fish & Wildlife Service employees lead the teams that conducted the study. Each team consulted with a group of specialized experts including individuals from the University of Arkansas, Arkansas State University, Arkansas Tech University, Southern Arkansas University and biologists from Nature Conservancy, Arkansas Highway Department, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, and Arkansas Game & Fish Commission.

 **GIS:** With data received from the districts, the GIS personnel have completed updating the Forest roads system. Most roads across the forest have been located and added to the forest-wide data base.

GIS supports all other Planning sections by producing the visual aid needed to bring the proposals to life. When maps are vital to demonstrate current situations vs. projected situations, the GIS shop is called into action to produce the necessary "pictures" of what is being proposed.



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New Employee Profile

Sarah Melville

Sarah Melville has joined the Planning Team as the Vegetation Management Planner.

Sarah earned a BA in Natural Resource Management at Western Carolina University in North Carolina. Her experiences since graduation include employment at Gifford Pinchot National Forest in Washington State as an interpretive naturalist, a forester at the Southern Research Station in Asheville, North Carolina and a forester trainee at the Oconee National Forest in Georgia.

We welcome Sarah to the Planning Team. During the Plan Revision process, we hope you take the opportunity to become acquainted with her.

Next Issue

The next **OZARK CONNECTION** is planned for January, 2004. At that time, we will discuss proposed alternatives and the scheduling of public meetings to discuss them.

In the meantime, enjoy your National Forests. Experience a drive during the Fall Color season. Find updates on our web page at www.fs.fed.us/oonf/ozark/fall/fall.html.

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